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LTG FRASER.

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SUBJECT: REMOVAL OF TWO OUTPOSTS: MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: Local press reported on April 3 that the GOI removed settlers from the Harhivi and Shevut Ami outposts. According to lawyer Michal Sfard who represents the Palestinian owner of the land at Shevut Ami, four teenage girls were removed from the one-room structure, allowing Israeli activists and Palestinians to briefly enter the site before some 90 settler youths reoccupied the site. Sfard said he thinks the exercise was designed to show the USG the GOI is moving against outposts. END SUMMARY.

Shevut Ami and Harhivi

2. (C) On April 3, local press reported that the GOI removed settler youth from Harhivi and Shevut Ami outposts near the Northern West Bank settlement of Qedumim on April 2. PolOff has visited Shevut Ami three times in the last four months, with the most recent visit on March 27. The outpost is a one room structure (approximately 25 square feet) that its Palestinian owner used to store tools. For some seven months, several settler youth (not always the same ones) have occupied the structure and denied access to the Palestinian owner. At both outposts, settler youth have repeatedly been removed by GOI security personnel.

3. (C) The Palestinian owner's lawyer Michal Sfard told PolOff April 3 that 100 border police arrived at Shevut Ami to remove four girls from the site April 2. Sfard said the IDF subsequently blocked the road below Shevut Ami, and soldiers prevented Palestinian entry to the area. He said he and other Israeli activists were allowed to enter the site upon presentation of their ID. According to Sfard, in the early afternoon, five Israeli activists and two Palestinians, who circumvented Israeli security, entered the site. He said approximately 90 shouting settler youth subsequently entered. He said he perceived the situation as dangerous and departed. According to Sfard, after the Palestinians and activists departed, the settlers successfully reoccupied the building, and "at the end of the day, we were back to square one." He added that "the GOI wanted the Americans to get the impression that they were moving against outposts."

4. (C) Note: PolOff has heard reports that Harhivi was also reoccupied after Israeli security personnel departed; however, Post has not been able to confirm that. End Note.

Settler leaders quiet

5. (C) Yesha Council Chairman Dani Dayan and his deputy Sarah Elyash, who lives at Qedumim, separately told PolOff they have no information about events at Shevut Ami, and they

have made no public statements. Dayan has previously described to PolOff actions by settler youths as "symbolically important" but "not pragmatic" in terms of efforts to establish new settlements.

Comment

16. (C) Yesterday's effort to dislodge settlers from Shevut Ami (and possibly Harhivi) did not succeed. However, even if had, it would not have been an "evacuation," as the press reported or compliance with Roadmap obligations. Neither Shevut Ami nor Harhivi is on the GOI list of outposts established since March 21, 2001. Israeli security forces have repeatedly chased young settler demonstrators off these and other West Bank hilltops, and settlers have repeatedly returned. Established outposts occupied full-time by settler families remain in place.

WALLES